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PATTERN TRANSMISSION IN A BICULTURAL COMMUNITY.
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A THREE-YEAR FIELD STUDY ABOUT THE CULTURE BASED PATTERNS THAT ARE CAUSES OF THE ETHNIC CLEAVAGE CHARACTERIZING ANGLO-MEXICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES OF THE SOUTHWEST WAS CONDUCTED IN ROSARIO, CALIFORNIA (55 PER CENT MEXICAN AMERICAN AND 40 PER CENT ANGLO). THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ROSARIO APPROACHES SIMMONS' "CASTE POLE" OF A RANKING CONTINUUM, DEMONSTRATED BY THE DIFFERENTIATION OF VILLAGERS ACCORDING TO ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION AND RACIAL OR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS. THESE TWO CULTURAL GROUPS FORM STEREOTYPED BELIEFS OF EACH OTHER WHICH SERVE TO REINFORCE THE ETHNICALLY DIFFERENTIATED SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNITY. IN GENERAL, THE ANGLOS PERCEIVED THE MEXICAN AMERICANS AS IMMORAL, VIOLENT, AND SUPERSTITIOUS, WHILE THE MEXICAN AMERICANS PERCEIVED THE ANGLOS AS UNSYMPATHETIC, AGGRESSIVE, HARSH, DEMANDING, AND INTERESTED ONLY IN THEMSELVES. THESE PATTERNED BELIEFS ARE TRANSMITTED AND SUPPORTED BY THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES OF THE COMMUNITY. SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION IN THIS TYPE OF COMMUNITY CANNOT TAKE PLACE THROUGH A SINGLE AGENCY SUCH AS THE PUBLIC SCHOOL, BUT WILL REQUIRE APPROACHES THROUGH MULTIPLE ASPECTS OF THE TOTAL SYSTEM. (ES)

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PATTERN TRANSMISSION IN A BICULTURAL COMMUNITY

The data presented in this paper were obtained during a three-year field study of an Anglo/Mexican American community in the southwest. The study was an inquiry into the persistent patterns of ethnic cleavage which characterize such communities and the social and cultural dynamics of pattern maintenance. As a consequence, the inquiry focused intensively on the institutions presumed to be responsible for transmitting core culture content to young members of the village community.

The village of Rosario is located in one of the rich agricultural valleys of the southern half of California. Village economic life centers on the growing and preparation for market of a variety of fresh vegetables and fruit. Of the population of about 1800 people, approximately 40% are "Anglo" or "Americans" as they are locally termed, 55% are Mexicans and 5% are of miscellaneous racial and cultural backgrounds. The social structure of this community approaches what Simmons has called the "Caste Pole" of a ranking continuum. The Anglo and the Mexican villagers are differentiated according to ethnic identification and "racial" or physical characteristics, the critical visibility symbols of which are language, color, and possession of Spanish surname. Each group is highly endogamous, and there are strong avoidance patterns between them. Contacts between the two groups occur almost wholly within the economic structure which is dominated by Anglos and in which relationships are impersonal. Anglo villagers control political and economic power and are dominant in nearly all relations with Mexicans. Institutional and organizational associations are segregated, with the Anglos using deliberate exclusion practices to maintain segregation. This was found to be particularly true of two major institutions in the village, the church and the school.

The rank system of the village is not completely closed and cannot, therefore, be considered a true caste situation. This is because of the Anglo notion of the possibilities of assimilation in the dim future and their willingness to enter into certain social relationships with those "high type" Mexicans who approach Anglo ideals, i.e., a person who is light skinned, aggressive, speaks unaccented English, is economically successful, educated, etc. Few such persons are to be found in Rosario. The four Mexicans who do meet these Anglo qualifications have been socially redefined as "Latin" and are admitted to some Anglo social activities which are held in public places but never to those held in private residences. Indeed, the patterns of residence and of inter-residence visiting, reveal that social cleavage between Anglos and Mexicans is virtually complete.

The ethnically differentiated social structure of the village is supported by mutually reinforcing images and expectations by means of which Anglos and Mexicans define the character of members of the other group. These images and expectations take the form of stereotyped beliefs according to which villagers organize their perceptions of, and behaviors toward, one another. They are descriptive in that they define the characteristics of members of the out-group, and prescriptive in that they indicate the need for appropriate behavioral adaptations to the defined characteristics. The patterned adaptive responses then constitute the norms governing social relations between the two groups. The data suggest, moreover, that the antithesis of the characteristics imputed to members of the out-group, is precisely the profile of characteristics attributed to the members of one's own group--and therefore to self. (From the Anglo point of view, what the Anglos

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are, the Mexicans are not, and vice-versa.) Thus these patterned beliefs appear to support both the socio-cultural system and the psycho-cultural systems within the village population, and to be an important linkage between the two.

In general, Anglo informants believe the Mexican villagers to be immoral, violent, superstitious, animal-like in their sexuality, physiologically and mentally underdeveloped (or less advanced on the evolutionary scale), improvident, irresponsible, lazy, black and child-like. Mexican informants characterize Anglos as being unsympathetic to members of their own group as well as to outsiders, aggressive, harsh, demanding, "cold," interested only in themselves, always worrying and unconcerned about the important human values. The reciprocal and self-sustaining nature of these belief systems is illustrated by the fact that the appropriate adaptive behaviors to which they respectively give rise are construed as realistic evidence of the validity of the beliefs. Thus Anglos behave toward Mexicans consistently with their beliefs about Mexicans; patterned Mexican responses to Anglo behaviors provide evidence to reinforce Anglo beliefs and lead to Anglo adaptive responses; these in turn provide evidence to support the Mexican beliefs about Anglos which structured their original responses to the Anglos. The dynamics of these reciprocating sub-systems define the content and form of the larger, community-level system. The stability of the community system depends upon the degree to which individuals learn the patterned attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of their own sub-systems--and how these articulate with the functioning whole. This implies, of course, that each individual develops a cognitive and dynamic awareness of self, subgroup, and community.

One incident which I observed provides a clear and dramatic illustration of how Anglo beliefs about the immoral and violent nature of village Mexicans structure their perceptions of real situations and their behavioral adaptation to them. During the course of the field investigation my wife and I attended several of the "Mexican Dances" held in the village. These dances were usually held on Saturday evenings, and when possible, in the Community Center. Other than my wife and I, I know of no Anglo who has ever attended one of these dances.

Anglo villagers, however, claim to have intimate knowledge of what happens at the dances. They believe that the dances are orgies of fighting, drunkeness and sexuality. To "contain the violence", as one influential Anglo put it, Anglo villagers take up a collection among themselves and hire a half dozen private police to come over from the county seat and cordon off the area immediately surrounding the community center. Because of the expense of this practice, the Anglo chamber of commerce, which controls the calendar for the use of the center, permits the Mexican villagers to use the recreation hall only infrequently. Toward the end of one evening, I stepped outside the building for a breath of cool air. There were six people outside the hall; my two male companions and myself, a Mexican girl and her boyfriend, and the Anglo private patrolman who had been stationed outside the front entrance. The Mexican man was drunk, but quiet and very formal in his relationship to the girl. As the couple walked by the side window of the building, the man stumbled and in falling threw his hand into a glass window. The glass badly cut his hand

and arm and he was bleeding profusely. At that moment a man emerged from the building and seeing the accident he rushed over to the couple and began to give aid. While trying to stop the bleeding with his handkerchief, the newcomer was speaking rapidly to the girl in Spanish, asking her what had happened and remarking that that was what comes of being so drunk. Hearing the excited talk, the Anglo patrolman turned away from his car where he had been listening to the short wave radio and, seeing the group on the sidewalk, rushed over, seized the injured man and dragged him to the patrol car. The injured man and the girl said that they wanted to go home, but the patrolman held them there and radioed for help. The man who had tried to help stepped back into the little crowd that had begun to collect and offered no more assistance. As more people emerged from the dance hall, the crowd grew larger, but there was little talking and little movement. They stood there silently watching. The girl began to argue with the patrolman, asking to take the injured man home. The more she argued the more agitated the patrolman seemed to become, and he unhooked the flap of his gun holster. The young man stood, bleeding, shaking and growing visibly weaker, but saying nothing. A police ambulance soon came and drove the injured man and the patrolman away. The girl was taken home by a cousin who was attending the dance, and the crowd quickly dispersed. No further incident occurred that evening. Other than I, the only Anglo to observe the entire sequence of events was the patrolman who had been hired by the village Anglos to curb violence.

Next day the Anglo villagers were very much excited about the "big brawl" that had taken place at the Mexican dance. Many said that there had been another slash fight with razors and pointed to the blood on the pavement as evidence. One prominent Anglo, telling the "news" to a group of friends outside the church, said that a "bunch of Mexicans got into a knife fight over a girl and that two or three were badly stabbed." He said that he was going to put pressure on the chamber of commerce to "do something to stop all this violence." The newspaper account which appeared two days later further substantiated the Anglo stories by stating that the Mexican man arrested for fighting at the Mexican dance had been fined $100 and given 15 days in jail. Upon reading the newspaper version, several friends of the injured man gathered in the local <u>cantina</u> and discussed ways they might help their friend. Their discussion was noisy, but inconclusive. Later, Anglo villagers were saying that the "Mexes" were planning to "get" two of the Anglo men in retaliation to the jailing of their friend. At the same time, the Mexican villagers were saying that the Anglos are aggressive, hard, always having their own way and therefore to be avoided.

Incidents such as these are important means for transmitting and maintaining village ethnic patterns. Discussion of the event provides opportunity for reinforcement of existing belief/value systems through agreement with others, through the emotional commitment built up during the repetition of a highly charged story, and by the appeal to the "objective evidence" which such discussions often include. As the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." And, for days following the above incident villagers were to be seen standing on the sidewalk before the community center and pointing to the bloodstains on the concrete while they discussed their meaning.

Throughout their lives, villagers are exposed to constant verbal instruction in and reinforcement of the ethnic world view. Frequently, this consists of stories and explanations of the nature of the other group and their activities. More often, however, it is expressed in the <u>Because</u> ... <u>Therefore</u> formula which is the form in which most village stereotypes are stated. The <u>Because</u> portion of these statements expresses a

belief about the characteristics of a group, and the Therefore portion indicates the adaptive behavior which is considered to be an appropriate response to the particular characteristics identified. The adaptations are generally withdrawal or exclusion. Let me quote three examples taken from ordinary backyard gossip situations:

> "(Because) Mexicans are not reliable; you can't be sure they will ever do a job right. (Therefore) I always get an American when I have something important I need done."
>
> "I don't let my boy go to that scout pack anymore. (Because) a bunch of Mexicans joined up and I am afraid they might gang up on him or give him something (a disease)."
>
> "Jess wanted to play Little League with the American boys. I told him it would be better if he played with the Mexican boys. (Because) If he didn't play too good he might get into trouble. A lot of these parents get real mad when their boys' teams lose a game. They always blame the Mexican boys and make trouble."

One particularly salient form of verbal instruction is that which is given in the weekly sermons in the Catholic Church to which 1400 of the 1800 villagers belong. Delivered by the Anglo priest, these sermons closely reflect the Anglo stereotype, and because the sermon is primarily a means of public instruction, they probably reinforce both the stereotypes and the social arrangements based upon them. Inasmuch as these sermons are delivered ex cathedra with all the aura of dogma and sanctity that this implies to Catholics, their influence on the thinking of the villagers is probably very great indeed. Their influence is probably greatest when they are delivered to the whole village on one of the many special days when there is only one mass which is heavily attended by both Anglos and Mexicans. On one such day, the following was included in the sermon:

> "You Mexicans need to learn the prayers of the church. We try to teach them to you in religious instruction classes, but we don't often get very far. You should keep trying to learn the prayers because this is the way you can get closer to God. You parents just let your kids run wild. If you would keep your children together at home and teach them the prayers of the Church and then pray regularly with them, maybe you wouldn't have so much trouble. Boys who pray at home with their parents and who come to church regularly will not be the ones who are out fighting with knives and getting into trouble... Remember, when you pray to Heaven you must have clean thoughts. You can't make a good prayer if you are thinking about getting a girl or planning some thrill. You have to think about Our Lord and not about yourselves... And when you pray you should be truly sorry for your sins. God doesn't listen to the prayers of people who are sinful. He does listen to people who are sorry. If you could try to know when you are sinful and be truly sorry, He will listen to your prayers."

The twice-yearly confirmation ceremony is an example of some of the more subtle means by which the church reinforces village ethnic patterns. These ceremonies are important social events in the village year and are attended by large crowds of Anglos and Mexicans. According to local custom, the Mexican villagers tend to sit toward the rear of the church and the Anglos sit toward the front. In the confirmation ceremony, Anglo youth are given precedence over the Mexicans: they march in first, sit in front of the Mexican youth, are confirmed first, and lead the recessional march. In Rosario

the Bishop customarily questions each child on some point of doctrine, and does so as part of the confirmation ceremony itself. He begins with the Anglo boys. As his turn comes, each boy stands and waits for his question. Once he has answered, he sits down and the next boy stands. When all the Anglo boys have been questioned satisfactorily, the Bishop turns to the Anglo girls and the process continues. On those occasions when an Anglo boy or girl hesitates over an answer, the Bishop waits until the answer is given. At times, however, he may help the child by giving hints or by asking related questions.

Once the Anglos have been questioned, the Bishop turns to the Mexican boys and then to the Mexican girls. The question process here, however, is not as smooth as it is with the Anglo children. The Bishop repeatedly admonishes the Mexican children not to "mumble." If the children hesitate or become confused in their answers to questions, he becomes quickly impatient and calls for some one of the Anglo children to "volunteer" to "help" the distressed Mexican child. Usually he selects a volunteer whom he is sure has the right answer, and praises him for knowing that which, presumably, the Mexican child does not know. Since there is always a relatively large number of Mexican children who need "help", a considerable portion of the ceremony is taken up by this question sequence in which the Bishop (as an authority of the church) repeatedly demonstrates the validity of the villagers ethnic images and expectations.

The use of Anglo "helpers" in question sequences is a practice that is widely employed in the village school as well as in the church. Nine of the eighteen Anglo teachers were observed to follow this procedure <u>whenever</u> they are working with Mexican children. Asked about this, one long-time village teacher said, "...if I didn't I would spend all day waiting for the Mexican children to give out with the answer. Most of them aren't awfully smart and they need help. It wouldn't do any good to ask one of the Mexican pupils to help out with an answer because they wouldn't know it either. Most of the time you can be sure that the American kids will know the answers. I think that it is better if the Mexican kids get help from an American kid who knows what he is talking about than from another Mexican who doesn't. Besides, it is good educational practice to have the American children help the Mexicans. It draws them out and gives them a feeling of importance."

To me, it seems that this and a wide variety of similar classroom practices in the village school contribute to the maintenance of ethnic patterns by putting the Mexican pupils in a subordinate position in the classroom, by reinforcing the Anglo stereotype of the unintelligent Mexican who needs the guidance of a superior and paternalistic Anglo who knows "best," and perhaps more significantly, by structuring public opportunities for Anglo and Mexican children to enter into prototypes of their adult relationships.

Within the school, the verbal expression of ethnic beliefs is much less open than it is in the general community. Because they are usually occupied with school matters, the children do not appear to state their beliefs and interpretations as frequently or openly in school as they do without. Whereas the teachers <u>do</u> express the Anglo beliefs frequently among themselves, they rarely ever make direct reference to them in the classroom. Instead, they structure the classroom groupings, sequence the instruction, and both verbally and symbolically <u>demonstrate</u> to the school population and the community the validity of these beliefs and the appropriateness of the patterned adaptive responses. The ability grouping program separates Anglo and Mexican pupils into

ethnically distinct groups and publically demonstrates the fact that Mexicans are less intelligent and ambitious than Anglos. This fact is further proclaimed in the policy of posting pupil achievement charts in the classroom. It is all too obvious that the Anglo names are the one followed by the gold stars, pink bunnies, etc., and that the Mexican names are usually not so adorned. That these charts influence pupil perceptions of one another was evidenced in the fact that pupils regularly used them as points of reference in making judgments about classmates.

In addition to the grouping procedures, teachers carry out a number of other practices which structure the social contacts of Anglo and Mexican pupils. In the choosing of monitors, game captains, special representatives, etc., the teachers habitually place Anglo children in "charge of" Mexican children. When they see a group of Mexican children misbehaving, teachers very frequently reprimand the whole group and then ask an Anglo child to take "charge" and "show" them how to act. The following quote from the field data illustrates both the practice and its meaning:

Interviewer: Do you remember the group of boys that you stopped from running out of the room the other day? I am thinking about the group that made a rush for the door at noon of the day that I visited your classroom. I have been wondering why it was that you selected Johnny to take the lead of the group.

Mrs. S. : Oh yes, I remember. Well, I try to follow the strict rule in my room that no one is to leave the room until everything has been put away and the class is excused.

Usually the kids are pretty good, but that day those boys were in a hurry to get out to the playground. There was some kind of activity going on during the lunch hour; I think that was the day they were putting some new black-top on the yard. I remember thinking that the Mexican boys were going to make trouble if I didn't catch them. You know, they just can't follow directions. You always have to tell them what you want done. They seem to have a hard time remembering the rules. Anyway, I thought that if I told Johnny to take the lead, they would have a good example of how to act.

Interviewer: Was there some reason why you chose Johnny specifically?

Mrs. S. : Yes. He was right there of course. Besides that, I think that Johnny needs to learn how to set a good example and how to lead others. His father owns one of the big farms in the area and Johnny has to learn how to lead the Mexicans. One day he will be helping his father, and he will have to know how to handle the Mexicans. I try to help him whenever I can. You ought to meet Mr. F. He came here with practically nothing and could only speak Italian. Now he is one of the important men in the community. He is an example for everybody to follow.

Interviewer: Do you mean that the Mexicans need somebody to direct them?

Mrs. S. : Definitely.

Interviewer: Why?

Mrs. S. : Well, they are just not very bright. Besides that they are lazy. No ambition at all. You should hear some of the boo-boo's that the Mexicans make around here.

The data obtained in this study reveal that the ethnically differentiated social patterns and associated stereotypes are learned by village children quite early. After the second grade, Anglo and Mexican American children increasingly restrict their social choices to members of their own ethnic groups. By the time they reach the upper elementary grades, there is virtually complete social separation between the two groups. That the children are aware of Anglo dominance is reflected in their leadership and prestige choices. Both Anglo and Mexican American children chose Anglos as sources of prestige and both groups made significant choices of Anglos for positions of leadership.

One of the most impressive features of the village social structure is the high degree of functional integration exhibited by its major institutions in the maintenance of the traditional ethnic patterns. Whether they are at home, in church, at school, on the playground, shopping with parents, attending Scout meetings, or watching the Harvest Festival activities, children are provided with examples of the social positions they are expected to occupy and the roles they are expected to play. They are frequently shown that Anglos are best in everything and the Mexicans are the worst. Mexican children are rewarded in school and in church when they look and act like Anglos and punished (or ignored) if they look and act like Mexicans. Anglo children are allowed to joke and talk freely with teachers, the priest, and adult Anglos, but Mexican children are expected to maintain a decorum of respect and formality. The ideal of ethnic separation is demonstrated and taught to the children through the fact that they <u>are</u> separated by the grouping practices of the school, by the seating class assignments in the church, by the Scout arrangements, etc. The examples and teachings of their parents further reinforce these learnings. Adults find the same consistency in social expectations as they move from their homes to the church, to their jobs or in the community at large. The beliefs which support these patterns are communicated unofficially through conversation and gossip and officially through pronouncements, warnings, analogies, stories, etc., made by teachers in school, the priest in church, the newspaper in print, the Chamber of Commerce officers in Town Meetings and so on.

In this brief presentation I have attempted to sketch out some of the ways in which ethnicity structures social and cultural patterns in a small southwestern community and to explore a few of the more overt mechanisms through which these patterns are transmitted and reinforced. I should like to end my remarks with a comment about (more properly a reaction to) some of the new federal and state supported school programs that are being forced upon communities like Rosario under the banners of "humanity" and "equality." Whether educators or other social reformers working unilateraly through the schools in such communities can ever attain their goals of social reconstruction is extremely problematic. The greater the functional integration of the social and belief/value attitude systems of the community, the greater the likelihood that efforts to produce such fundamental changes will require approaches through multiple aspects of the system.

The power of the school to induce significant social change is probably always very limited for the school does not have effective, lasting or broad enough sanctions available to it. In small, highly integrated communities this power will be even more restricted for the traditional mechanisms of social control will operate both within and without the school and limit both the teachers' freedom to institute change and the pupils' freedom to accept it. Also, where changes contrary to traditional patterns and

concepts are introduced through one institution of such a community, the others may be expected to attempt to correct and/or compensate for these. Thus, as in Rosario, when the child comes home from school with a notion contrary to accepted patterns he will be corrected within the home, the church and other non-school institutions. Even massive community-wide efforts to produce basic socio-cultural changes of the type required to bring about assimilation of the Anglo and Mexican groups in the Southwest would require substantial periods of time. Dubois states that, "Changes at this level must be reckoned not in two, five or ten-year programs, but on a generational basis."

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